

## Water and the West: Creating a Durable Vision



**"When you drink the water, remember the spring."** ~ From a Chinese proverb

Despite agriculture's importance to our economy and quality of life, we know there are many factors beyond our control that challenge the long-term sustainability of this resource in California.

Some of the constraints confronting farmers and ranchers include compliance with strict environmental standards and the [Endangered Species Act](#) as well as competition for limited water and other resources.

In my last column, I described Governor Schwarzenegger's awareness of these issues and his willingness to exercise political muscle to help improve the state's water infrastructure—so necessary for our industry to thrive. When he appointed the [Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force](#), he charged them with developing "a durable vision for sustainable management of the Delta." The development of a [Delta Vision Strategic Plan](#) is now underway.

The second major initiative involving water issues is the [Bay Delta Conservation Plan](#). Last year, a federal judge issued an order reducing pumping of water exported from the Delta by as much as 30 percent in order to protect the Delta smelt and its ecosystem. With yesterday's [final snow survey of the 2008 season](#) indicating the water content at 67 percent of normal, the news is definitely not good for water deliveries through the Delta.

To address the overriding issue of declining aquatic habitat and dwindling supplies of water for Californians and the farms that help feed our nation, the [California Resources Agency](#) is facilitating this conservation planning process. Large Delta water users, the [California Farm Bureau Federation](#) and environmental groups comprise the steering committee leading and funding this effort.

Starting on April 28th and ending on May 14th, a series of public workshops—called environmental scoping sessions—will be held to gather input on potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed conservation plan. These scoping sessions are the first step in developing the [California Environmental Quality Act's](#) impact report, which will identify significant environmental impacts and consider project alternatives.

You can learn about the Bay Delta Conservation Plan process and contribute your input through their Web site at <http://resources.ca.gov/bdcp>. The Web site includes details about the proposed plan, workshop dates and locations, and explains how and when written comments may be submitted.

CDFA will also provide comment during the planning process to ensure that issues of importance to agriculture are addressed. I encourage all Californians concerned about the future of agriculture to become familiar with this important undertaking. If you have ideas to make this plan one that protects our ecosystem as well as our food system, please attend one of the scoping sessions and submit your comments.

As always, thank you for your support of California agriculture.

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